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Office of the Secretary of State

## Step-by-Step: Closing an Election

### Overview

While it might not seem to be the case at first glance, closing an election is of vital importance to the elections process. Closing the election modifies the voter's history which impacts search criteria, NVRA processes, voting credit and facilitates election processing for other counties that might still be holding an election after your election ends. In short, not closing the election prevents the voter's status from being updated which will impact voter record searches and the voter registration process.

Elections can be closed as soon as all absentee and provisional ballots have been processed, and must be closed after the official canvass has been completed. The rationale behind this being that once an election is closed, ballots can no longer be updated or processed in that election and the status of all late registrants in the election will be automatically changed from Late Registrant to Active. This will obviously have an impact on your reports.

In order to save time, a number of reports should be run before you close the election. These reports are:

- **VR-022 – Late Registration Statistics:** Since closing the election updates the voter's status from Late Registration to Active, this report is nice to have for archival purposes. Doing a countywide search of all late registrants and saving that data is also recommended.
- **BP-020 – Duplicate Ballot Report:** Running this report will help you verify those individuals that may appear to have returned more than one ballot. They will need to be identified before closing the election.
- **EX-E01 Export for Absentee Voters in an Election or E-001 Absentee Voters for an Election:** This is a good record to have of all Absentee Ballots right before you close the election and will help with troubleshooting if you have problems closing the election.
- **BP-010 Ballot Batches Unprocessed** – If this report has data, you will need to fix it before attempting to close your election.

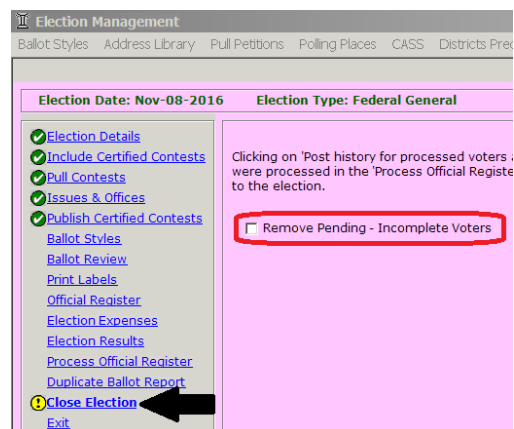
For help troubleshooting the election closure process, proceed to the [troubleshooting](#) section of this document.

## Closing an Election: Step-by-Step

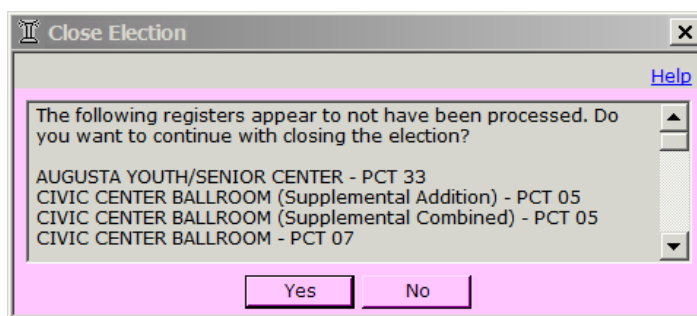
To close your election follow these steps:

- 1) In MT Votes, go to Election Management module
- 2) In the Election Management module, find the Close Election link (black arrow below) on the left sidebar.

**NOTE:** You may, at your option, click the Remove Pending-Incomplete Voters checkbox (circled in red above) to remove those electors with incomplete voter registration records.



- 3) Click the Post History for Processed Voters and Close Election button to have MT Votes review your registers and look for any unprocessed voters. If the system identifies any such voters they will appear like this:



Investigate if these registers have truly not been processed:

- If they have not been processed, click No and process the listed registers. If for some reason you cannot process them, contact the Helpdesk for assistance.
  - If they have been processed, but are still listed on this popup, contact the helpdesk for assistance.
  - If you are certain that all registers have been processed, click Yes.
- 4) The system will next remind you to run the VR-022 report.
    - If you have not run the VR-022 click No to exit the Close Election process. Go to Reports and Labels from the main MT Votes page and run the VR-022 report.
    - If you have already run the VR-022 report, click Yes.
  - 5) MT Votes will next verify you to run the BP-20 report.
    - If you have not run the BP-20 report, open another session of MT Votes and use the Report and Labels module to run the BP-20 report.
    - If you have run the BP-20 report, click OK.
    - Use the BP-20 report to verify that those persons listed on the report only voted once. This may require that you contact other counties and can take some time.
  - 6) MT Votes will verify that you do, in fact, want to close the election. Click Yes to continue.

**NOTE:** Closing the election can take some time and you will not be able to use MT Votes while the Election is being closed.

**NOTE:** Once an election has been closed, MT Votes will give voting credit to all participants.

- 7) After the close process has completed, run the VR-012 Voting Activity Report to review voting history for the election.

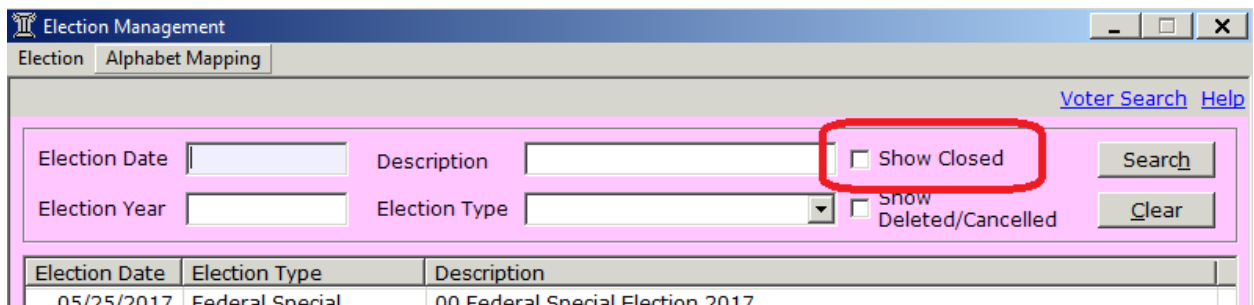
## Troubleshooting

MT Votes may tell you that it cannot close the election. Here are some common reasons:

- Unprinted ballots in an Active/Prepared status
  - Run the E-001 Absentee Voters for an Election report OR the EX-E01 Export for Absentee Voters in an Election for your county and then search for the word “prepared.”
- Unresolved provisional ballots
  - Search the provisional ballot module for any ballots that not been resolved.
- Ballots remain in a Processed/Received status, but have not been accepted or rejected
  - Run the BP-010 Ballot Batches Unprocessed report

Some errors can only be corrected by re-opening the election. **If you do need to re-open a closed election close it again as soon as possible.** To re-open an election, follow these steps:

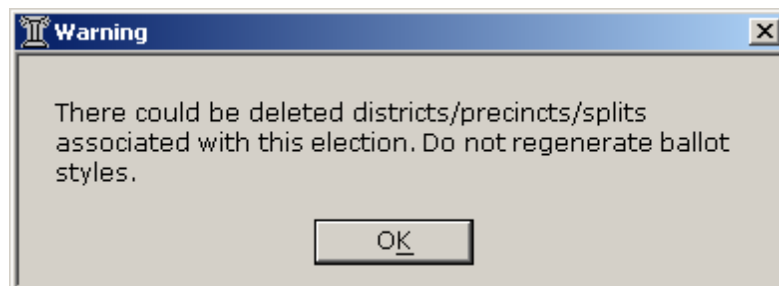
- 1) Open Election Management
- 2) As the election has been closed, it will not appear in the list of active elections. To find your election run an Election search and be sure to click the Show Closed checkbox.



The screenshot shows the 'Election Management' window with the 'Alphabet Mapping' tab selected. The search area is highlighted in pink. It contains fields for 'Election Date', 'Election Year', 'Description', and 'Election Type'. There are two checkboxes: 'Show Closed' (which is checked and highlighted with a red rectangle) and 'Show Deleted/Cancelled'. There are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons. Below the search area is a table with the following data:

Election Date	Election Type	Description
05/25/2017	Federal Special	00 Federal Special Election 2017

- 3) From the search results, click the election you want to re-open and then click Details.
- 4) Click the Close Election option to show the Close Election screen.
- 5) The only active button on the screen will be Reopen Election. Click it to re-open the election.
- 6) A warning will pop-up indicating that any changes to the districts/precincts/splits since the election was closed would cause issues with regenerating ballot styles. **Do not regenerate ballot styles in a re-opened election.**



- 7) Clicking OK will re-open the election.

**As always if you have any questions or comment please don't hesitate to email the helpdesk at [soshelpdesk@mt.gov](mailto:soshelpdesk@mt.gov) or call 866-541-6767.**